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Looking Beyond Binaries: How Native Activists Create Decolonized Futures

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LOOKING BEYOND BINARIES:
HOW NATIVE ACTIVISTS CREATE DECOLONIZED FUTURES

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Abstract

Native people in the United States and Canada have been resisting settler colonialism for as long as settlers have tried to impose it upon them. That activism has been continuous across centuries; however, sometimes that overall narrative has been lost due to the imposition of settler perspectives that constrain Native activism. Recent Native activist movements in the United States and Canada such as the anti-Keystone Pipeline protests and Idle No More received a lot of attention from both the public and the media, but there was an impulse to define these movements within binary categories like "male or female" or "successful or unsuccessful." Using an Indigenous-centered approach and decolonizing methodology, this thesis examines the American Indian Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the Keystone protests, and Idle No More. A close examination of the importance of intergenerational change to Native activists and the role of Native women in these movements and eras reveals the dynamic legacy of Native activism that defies categories such as gender and failure or success. Working across and beyond binaries, Native activists since the 1960s have drawn on diverse strategies to create decolonized Indigenous futures.

Key Words: Native American History, Native Activism, Native Women, American Indian Movement, Keystone Pipeline, Idle No More

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Introduction

On December 18, 2012, hundreds of people, both Native and non-Native, gathered at the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta to hold a rally as part of the larger Idle No More movement. The highlight of this peaceful protest was a round dance encircling an indoor lake that held a life-sized model of Christopher Columbus's ship the Santa Maria, an assertion of Native presence in a space that had long been colonized by settlers. The protestors' goal was to draw attention to a Canadian budget bill, Bill C-45, that included changes to the Indian Act and regulations that protect waterways. One protestor called the bill "an assault on First Nations people."[1] To an outside observer who hadn't followed the criticism of Bill C-45, it may have seemed strange that a dense, policy-stuffed bill could inspire such a passionate rally. However, looking at Bill C-45 more closely reveals that it was part of a pattern of Canada undermining the sovereignty of Native nations and failing to take Native perspectives into account. Placed into its proper context, this protest can be seen as part of a much longer history of Native resistance to settler colonialism and the fight for Native sovereignty and decolonized Indigenous futures.

In this paper, I examine patterns across two different periods of activism: the Red Power Movement in the United States in the 1970s and the more contemporary wave of activism in both the United States and Canada. Specifically, I will be looking at AIM and other 1970s Native activism, the anti-Keystone Pipeline movement, and the Idle No More movement that began in Canada. By analyzing these movements side-by-side, I will show how, despite the seemingly

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[1] "Hundreds Take Part in 'Idle No More' Protest at West Edmonton Mall," *CBC*, December 18, 2012, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/hundreds-take-part-in-idle-no-more-protest-at-west-edmonton-mall-1.1164541.

different origins and strategies of these movements, they are all interconnected as responses to settler colonialism and policies that threaten Native sovereignty.

Most Americans, including scholars, tend to look at activism and analyze it based on binaries. For example, they will attempt to answer questions like, "Was the movement a success or a failure?", "Was the movement feminist or not?", or "Did it have clear leadership or a lack of leadership?"[2] Trying to understand Native activism through binaries—male vs. female, success vs. failure, and immediate vs. long-term—constrains our understanding of Native people's struggles to a settler colonial perspective. This paper deconstructs these limiting, distorting binaries to reveal a history of Native activism from the 1960s to the present that shows how the diverse strategies and goals of Native activism are working to create decolonized futures for Indigenous people.

In order to dismantle the settler-imposed binary frameworks and refocus our attention on Indigenous perspectives, this thesis discusses two aspects of Indigenous activism: gender or Indigenous feminisms and intergenerational change. After providing the historical and scholarly context, I analyze the role of women in the Red Power Movement and how that relates to decolonization and creating Indigenous futures. Then, I examine what the lens of intersectionality reveals about binaries and Native women's activism. By looking at the idea of intergenerational change that guides many Native activists, I show how Native movements defy

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[2] Melissa De Witte, "Leaderless, Decentralized Protest Is a Strength and a Weakness, Warns Civil Rights Scholar Clayborne Carson," *Stanford News*, June 4, 2020, https://news.stanford.edu/2020/06/04/leaderless-protest-strength-weakness/; Emmanuelle Richez, Vincent Raynauld, Abunya Agi, and Arief B. Kartolo, "Unpacking the Political Effects of Social Movements with a Strong Digital Component: The Case of #IdleNoMore in Canada," *Social Media + Society* 6, no. 2 (April 2020), https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120915588; Phil McKenna, "2016: How Dakota Pipeline Became a Native American Cry for Justice," *Inside Climate News*, December 27, 2016, https://insideclimatenews.org/news/27122016/standing-rock-dakota-access-pipeline-native-american-protest-environmental-justice/.

being categorized as successes or failures and that both short-term and long-term goals are important to Native activism. This analysis demonstrates how moving beyond binaries leads to a better understanding of the strategies and goals of Native activism and how those strategies are used to create decolonized Indigenous futures.

This thesis contributes to the field of Native American history in three ways. First, I crafted a definition of Native activism that is broad enough to include the myriad strategies used by activists in the twenty-first century. Second, by building off of work by historian Cutcha Risling Baldy and others, I applied a decolonizing praxis in my analysis that makes clear the impact that settler colonialism has had on Native nations while also leaving space for Native people to create their own decolonized futures that are not beholden to the past. Finally, by connecting activist movements from the 1960s and 1970s to ongoing Indigenous activism today, I reveal the connections between their goals, strategies, and philosophies, tracing how Native activism has developed across several generations. Ultimately, this paper shows that settler-imposed binaries distort our understanding of Native activism. Pushing past those binaries allows us to see a more complete history of Native activism.

Sources and Methodology

My ability to research and the sources that were available to me were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I had limited access to my University library, and the public libraries in my area were operating with limitations when they were not entirely closed. This meant that it was more difficult for me to access books and other physical sources. In some cases, I had to rely on eBook versions when I would have otherwise preferred to have a physical book. More importantly, the pandemic also limited my access to primary resources. I have previously worked with Archives and Special Collections at UNL and may have tried to include more local sources

if the pandemic had not forced them to limit their hours and change their visitor policy. For these reasons, I chose to research time periods and movements that I could easily research online, supported by accessible secondary source materials. Therefore, I examined well-publicized movements with extensive press coverage; activists' oral histories, interviews, memoirs, and other public statements; and other digital footprints. These strategic choices allowed me to gather a primary source base for this project that would assist me in exploring my chosen topic in depth.

I am approaching this paper as a non-Native person. I am a white American of Euro-American descent with ties to both the United States and Canada. However, I have learned about settler colonialism and imperialism in high school and college from a mostly Indigenous perspective. I learned about the diversity and vibrancy of Native nations before the arrival of Europeans and that the majority of those nations still exist today. I also learned how to debunk the "vanishing Indian" myth. Native people still exist, maintain their own cultures and nations, and have influenced and continue to influence the wider American and Canadian cultures. Because of this background, I used an Indigenous-centered approach to my research and grounded my scholarship in a decolonizing methodology.

An Indigenous-centered approach means privileging Indigenous perspectives. Therefore, I prioritized sources written by Native people or sources written by non-Native people that approached their topic in a way that centered Native perspectives. A good example of the latter is Ken Coates's book *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of Canada*. Coates is not Native, and, though he has a lot of experience writing about and researching Native issues, he does not consider himself an expert. Rather, he considers himself to be "always a student."[3] Throughout his book,

[3] Ken Coates, *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of Canada* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), xv.

he strove to understand what the Idle No More Movement meant to the Indigenous people of Canada rather than simply taking the way the movement was discussed in the media and by politicians at face value. Throughout this paper, I follow Coates' model in the way I approach the Indigenous activists and movements discussed within this thesis.

Additionally, this thesis challenges the dominant narrative of Native activism by connecting multiple generations of activists in a continuous struggle for tribal sovereignty. The story about activism still often isolates the 1970s AIM-style activism of takeovers and marches from the everyday activism that occurs throughout Indian Country.[4] Scholars such as Charles Wilkinson, however, have begun to reconfigure and reconnect that fractured narrative. In *Blood Struggle*, Wilkinson shows how the Red Power Movement and AIM were connected to Native activism both before and after the 1960s and 1970s. The Red Power Movement itself may have been brief, but, as Wilkinson shows, it was part of a much longer struggle for tribal sovereignty. One thread that is missing from his narrative is the contribution of Native women to this period of activism. The word "woman" does not appear in the index of this nearly 400-page book, meaning its perspective is somewhat limited.[5] This project builds on Wilkinson's discussion of how Native nations actively pursued their sovereignty throughout the twentieth century, pushing beyond his male and reservation leadership-centered focus to show a more dynamic view of Native activism.

To recover overlooked stories and Indigenous perspectives, I drew on autobiographical sources of movement members. Because I wanted to approach this paper in a way that prioritized

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[4] Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1997).
[5] Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York*:* W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

Native voices, it was important to me to incorporate these first-hand accounts of the Red Power Movement. The first is Russell Means' (Lakota) autobiography *Where White Men Fear to Tread*. I felt it was important to incorporate the perspective of one of the major leaders of AIM in my paper. Means was one of the most public figures during the Red Power Movement, and has a unique perspective on the movement.[6] I also used *Lakota Woman* by Mary Crow Dog (Lakota) to provide a more personal lens through which to view the Red Power Movement. She was not as involved in the leadership of the movement as other women I studied, such as Phyllis Young (Lakota) and Madonna Thunder Hawk (Lakota), were. I found her more individual story helped show the meaning of the Red Power Movement to ordinary Native people who were activists but were not as involved in AIM's decision-making process or organizational structure.[7] *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* is written by the novelist and nonfiction writer Peter Matthiessen, but the way it is written presents historical context alongside information drawn directly from interviews with Leonard Peltier (Ojibwe), so I would consider this book at least semi-autobiographical. This book was most helpful for its description of the FBI's war on the American Indian Movement, which gave insight into the decline of the movement that other primary sources did not go into as much detail on.[8] These memoirs provided me with three very different perspectives on the Red Power Movement: one from a major public figure, one from an activist who was at many of the Red Power Movement's most important protests, but was not one of its leaders, and one from an activist who, decades after this memoir was published, is still in prison. These distinct viewpoints helped me understand what the Red Power Movement meant to different people.

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[6] Russell Means and Martin J. Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).
[7] Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, *Lakota Woman* (New York: Grove Press-Grove Atlantic, 1990), Kindle.
[8] Peter Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992).

Because my access to physical archives was limited, I assembled a digital archive that drew on digitized interview collections and press coverage of contemporary movements and protests, as well as published collections of first-hand accounts. For instance, I used the Warrior Women Oral History Project, a collection of interviews from some of the key Native women activists and organizers from the Red Power Movement. The Warrior Women interviews that I relied on in this paper were with Phyllis Young, Madonna Thunder Hawk, and Choach Means. These interviews had a very loose structure that did not usually tie the women's comments to specific events. Rather, the Warrior Women interviews gave these women the opportunity to reflect on their role in AIM and the effects their activism has had on their communities in way that was very honest. Though it was difficult at times to tie their comments directly to what was happening in the Red Power Movement at the time that they were involved, their comments helped me understand the philosophies that helped guide their activism during that period. Phyllis Young especially went into great detail about how her involvement in AIM and the Red Power Movement impacted her life and her community. These interviews helped me ensure that I was centering Indigenous voices.

There is a lot of research about both of these periods of resistance, but there is not very much literature comparing and contrasting them. One exception is Nick Estes' *Our History Is Our Future.* This book connects the two eras by tracing how past Lakota resistance led to the Keystone Pipeline protests.[9] His book is an excellent resource for tracing the evolution of Lakota activism, but I wanted to build on his work by looking at Native activism more broadly. My work will help to address this gap in research by looking at some of the goals and strategies that

[9] Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London: Verso Books, 2019), ProQuest Ebook Central.

these two eras have in common and by looking at Native activism in both the United States and Canada. Rather than focus my analysis on a specific Native nation or a region, I strove to include examples and voices from activists of diverse backgrounds and trace the continuation and evolution of Native activism by examining patterns between the Red Power Movement and these contemporary movements.

By dismantling hegemonic binaries and privileging Indigenous perspectives, this project challenges dominant narratives of settler colonialism. According to historian Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism differs from standard colonialism because settler colonialism requires the removal of the Native population so that they can be replaced by the settlers.[10] In the United States this form of colonialism has manifested in the literal removal of Indigenous people from their land, and in the genocide of Native populations. However, it has also manifested in more abstract ways. For example, the myth of the "Vanishing Native," the idea that Indigenous cultures, philosophies, and people are dying out and being replaced by the "modern world," can be traced back to the settler colonial idea that settlers will replace the Native population. In this way, the settler colonial mindset denies the possibility of Indigenous futures.

My work strives to move beyond settler colonial frameworks and pursue a decolonized approach to Native history. Decolonization is fundamentally about recovering from centuries of settler colonialism and dismantling the settler colonist worldview. However, scholars have emphasized that decolonization is not necessarily about returning to the past.[11] Cutcha Risling Baldy in *We Are Dancing for You* writes that she wants to focus on a decolonization that "can

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[10] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240.
[11] Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

build Indigenous futures."[12] Under this framework, decolonizing is both about reexamining history and working towards a future that is not governed by either settler philosophies or the past. By actively applying a decolonizing methodology to my work, I am ensuring that I am looking at the past in a way that prioritizes Native perspectives over settler perspectives but also allowing space for Native people to create their own futures.

Additionally, a decolonizing approach means applying a critical perspective to non-Native sources, like mainstream media, and reading them through a settler colonial filter. When I incorporated a source, especially a source from a non-Native perspective, I ensured that I was reading the source closely to identify any biases that the author might have from living in a society that is, in many ways, defined by settler colonialism. I also tried to be mindful of how I was using sources. For example, I mostly used primary sources from non-Native perspectives for factual or background information and preferred direct quotes or statements from Native activists when discussing the underlying philosophy and strategy of their activism. In this way, I ensured that I was taking advantage of all sources available to me while still centering Indigenous perspectives.

Defining Native Activism

In recent decades, scholars have expanded our understanding of Native activism and, by extension, Native struggles for sovereignty. This expanded definition helped me approach my research in a way that ensured I was taking into account the variety of strategies used by Native activists. A standard dictionary definition of activism is "The policy or action of using vigorous

[12] Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 8.

campaigning to bring about political or social change."[13] While this definition is adequate as a description of activism in general, it clearly fails to capture the specific context of activism throughout Native history. A definition that is more specifically about Native activism will be more useful for this analysis. Thankfully, other scholars have made an effort to create a better working definition of Native activism.

For instance, historian Charles Wilkinson frames Native activism in the mid-twentieth century as a successful movement for social justice on par with the Black Civil Rights Movement and the women's movement. He focuses on how Native activism in that period considerably advanced Native sovereignty and improved the lives of Native people. In *Blood Struggle*, he also focuses his analysis on the Native leaders who advanced these ideas rather than on the federal government's policy changes.[14] In this way, he prioritizes the voices of Native activists. However, he also writes that Native activism "has put on grand display America's truest nobility,"[15] and explains that Native sovereignty is just as noble as "the ideals of justice or freedom, to which tribal sovereignty is closely related."[16] By framing Native sovereignty in terms of American ideals, Wilkinson does not discard the settler colonial mindset and doesn't approach Native activism with a decolonizing methodology. Wilkinson advances our understanding of Native activism and places the Red Power Movement into an appropriate historical context with other social movements of the mid-twentieth century, but his understanding of Native activism and sovereignty is still limited because of the way he contextualizes them in Euro-American philosophy.

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[13] *Oxford University Press,* s.v. "activism," accessed February 20, 2021, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/activism.
[14] Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, xiv-xv.
[15] Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle,* xv.
[16] Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle,* xvi.

Historian Daniel Cobb expands our understanding of Native activism further by crafting a definition that is inclusive of a variety of strategies used by Native activists. In the introduction to *Native Activism in Cold War America*, he points out that standard summaries of the Red Power Movement of the 1970s tend to focus only on the more militant and visible protests such as the occupation of Alcatraz or the Long Walk, leaving out much of the other activism going on at the time. He argues that the definition of activism should be expanded to include "reformative goals and conventional tactics."[17] He provides some examples of what would be included under this definition such as "writing grants, holding community meetings, convening summer workshops, organizing youth councils, giving testimony at congressional hearings, authoring books and editorials, and manipulating the system from within."[18] This expanded definition better captures the context surrounding AIM and the Red Power movement. It is more inclusive of the work done by the Native women who worked behind the scenes with AIM, such as Phyllis Young who (among other things) prepared exhibits for court cases that Native activists brought against the United States government, allowing scholars to make visible a broad spectrum of labor and strategies that expand our understanding of Native activism's goals and outcomes.[19] Additionally, looking at activism in this more expansive way can allow scholars to see the connections between the Red Power Movement and contemporary activism. Most of the very visible activist organizations of the Red Power Movement had fallen out of the public view by the end of the 1970s, but Native people continued to strive for sovereignty in other, usually less

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[17] Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 2.
[18] Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 2.
[19] Madonna Thunder Hawk and Phyllis Young, "Madonna Thunder Hawk Phyllis Young 1 27 03," interview by Elizabeth A. Castle, The Warrior Women Project, January 27, 2003, video, 43:32, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjcyKnmcXxI.

nationally visible, ways.

In the twenty-first century, the definition introduced by Cobb can be expanded even further. Social media campaigns can encourage young Native people and non-Native people to become involved in activism or just generally be more aware of the problems that impact Native communities. For example, activists in the United States and Canada have used the hashtag #MMIWG (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls) to draw attention to the disproportionate rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and homicide against Native women.[20] This strategy has also been used by Keystone Pipeline activists with the hashtag #noKXL to spread information about the pipeline and encourage others to get involved.[21] These social media campaigns represent solidarity between Native people in the United States and Canada because Native activists in both countries participate in them. They are also representative of the way that Native activists have adapted their strategies to take advantage of new opportunities to raise awareness and inform people.

The definition could also be expanded to include decolonization efforts that are happening on a more local or tribal level. For example, scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa/Yarok/Karuk) details how her mother Lois Risling revitalized the Flower Dance, a women's coming-of-age ceremony that had not been practiced by the Hoopa Valley Tribe for decades, in her book *We Are Dancing for You*.[22] Another example of successful activism at a hyper-local level is the Wiyot Tribe regaining Duluwat Island from the city of Eureka, California

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[20] Carolyn Smith-Morris, "Addressing the Epidemic of Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," *Cultural Survival,* March 6, 2020, https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/addressing-epidemic-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls.
[21] Kay Smith, "Can Social Media Save the World?", *Business 2 Community*, February 23, 2012, https://www.business2community.com/social-media/can-social-media-save-the-world-0136628.
[22] Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*.

more than a century after losing it to settlers.[23] It is understandable why activism at a federal level draws more attention since, if that activism is successful, newly implemented policies and programs can impact almost all Native people living in the United States or Canada. However, these more local campaigns directly and immediately affect the people in those communities. Risling Baldy writes that tribes who have world renewal dances (similar to the Hupa Flower Dance) "demonstrate through song, through prayer, through laughter and stories and dance that we believe in our futures, that we continue to see our futures as tangible."[24] Bringing this ceremony back in her community has had very positive effects on the women who had the opportunity to undergo the ceremony.[25] Revitalizing these cultural practices and regaining land is an important part of recovering from the effects of settler colonialism. These efforts can also contribute to Native activism on a larger scale since Native people who have seen that local activism be successful and positively impact their lives and the people in their communities will be more likely to push for change at a state or national level, possibly through more national movements by supporting the Keystone Pipeline protests or participating in Idle No More. It was important for me to look beyond the dictionary definition of activism and then beyond Cobb's definition so that I could see the full scope of Native activism in the twenty-first century.

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[23] Thadeus Greenson, "Duluwat Island is Returned to the Wiyot Tribe in Historic Ceremony," *North Coast Journal*, October 21, 2019, https://www.northcoastjournal.com/NewsBlog/archives/2019/10/21/duluwat-island-is-returned-to-the-wiyot-tribe-in-historic-ceremony.
[24] Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 152.
[25] Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You,*142-147.

Historical Overview

There is a long history of Native American activism in North America that has been extensively documented by other scholars.[26] As long as European settlers have been seeking to remove Indigenous people from their land in the United States and Canada, Native people have resisted. As settler colonialism became increasingly systemic in North America through the creation of the United States and Canadian governments and policies that sought to remove Native people from their land or assimilate them into what eventually became the dominant culture, Native people continued to resist. Native people are still striving for sovereignty and decolonization today, and the development of the Red Power Movement, the Keystone Pipeline protests, and Idle No More reveals how Native people use a variety of strategies to develop Indigenous futures.

In the late nineteenth century, as the U.S. and Canadian governments sought to confine and contain Indigenous people in the West on reserves and reservations, Indigenous people continued to enact decolonized futures. Perhaps one of the most well-known acts of Native resistance in the late 1800s was the practice of the Ghost Dance. The dance was started by the Paiute spiritual leader Wovoka and spread to many Native nations in the Midwest. It was practiced as an act of defiance against settler attempts to outlaw Native religious and spiritual

[26] Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*; Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*; Estes, *Our History is the Future;* Kent Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom: Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement* (London: Yale University Press, 2018); Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane;* Rosalyn R. LaPier and David R. M. Beck, *City Indian: Native American Activism in Chicago, 1893-1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Edward Charles Valandra, *Not Without Our Consent: Lakota Resistance to Termination, 1950-59* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Edward Lazarus, *Black Hills/White Justice: The Sioux Nation vs. the United States, 1775 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

practices and assimilate Native nations into Euro-American society.[27] The Ghost Dance was a statement of Native American identity and culture in defiance of the threat of assimilation. In some respects, Wovoka's philosophy surrounding the Dance was similar to the world renewal dances that Risling Baldy describes in the section quoted above. Settler fears of the power embodied in this dance ultimately led to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, during which the U.S. military slaughtered nearly 300 Lakota men, women, and children.[28] Many scholars use the 1890 massacre as an endpoint, but the Lakota nation and Indigenous activism more generally lived on.[29]

A very different form of Native activism would be seen just a couple decades later. In the early twentieth century, boarding school survivors and tribal leaders formed new, often intertribal coalitions, including the Society of American Indians (SAI) in October 1911. These activists chose to work within the system to advocate for Native rights. When the U.S. Congress granted full citizenship to Native people in 1924, it was likely due to SAI's advocacy for Native veterans of World War I alongside White reformers like the Indian Rights Association (IRA).[30] This example shows that when American society became more open to reform and progressivism, Native people who had connections within settler society realized that collaborating with White allies could provide a tool for sovereignty and better Indigenous futures. Just these two examples demonstrate the wide variety of strategies used by Native activists to resist to settler colonialism.

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[27] L.G. Moses, "'The Father Tells Me So!' Wovoka: The Ghost Dance Prophet," *American Indian Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1985): 340-341. https://doi.org/10.2307/1183834.
[28] Moses, "'The Father Tells Me So!'", 342.
[29] Estes, *Our History Is the Future.*
[30] Steven Sabol, "In Search of Citizenship: The Society of American Indians and the First World War," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 2 (2017): 268-71. https://doi.org/10.5403/oregonhistq.118.2.0268.

Clearly, Native activism has a long and unbroken history, encompassing a variety of strategies in the search for a shared goal: an Indigenous, decolonized future. This arc of activism continued through the 1960s and 1970s in the Red Power movement and lives on to this day as seen in the rise of the Idle No More (INM) and anti-Keystone Pipeline protests. Though these movements are separated by several decades, they were reactions to similar concerns about settler colonial infringement on Indigenous lands, people, and sovereignty.

The mid-twentieth century was a time of change in the United States, and many social justice movements, including the Black Civil Rights Movement, Second Wave Feminism, the Red Power Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement, were able to gain public attention in a way that had not been possible before. According to David Archambault, one of the leaders in the Keystone Pipeline protests, "The Civil Rights Movement was a catalyst for the American Indian Movement."[31] Native activists saw that the Black Civil Rights Movement was gaining media attention through public protests and that they were raising public awareness of the struggles Black Americans faced. This encouraged Native activists to make their struggles similarly impossible for the public to ignore by forming new organizations and strategies that would take advantage of the general culture of change and social reckoning.

AIM was founded in 1968 as a response to both this culture of change and to the way that the United States government was threatening Native sovereignty and Native people in the mid-twentieth century. Many of AIM's leaders were Native people who had grown up in urban areas due to the federal government's policy of termination of Native nations and relocation of Native people. They founded AIM to protest this policy and to address the day-to-day problems that

[31] David Archambault, "The Standing Rock Protests and the Struggle for Tribal Sovereignty," *Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 2 (2020): 234, https://doi.org/10.2307/26939979.

Native people faced, including housing and employment discrimination, education inequality, and police brutality.[32] Some of AIM's most influential leaders were Russell Means (Lakota) and Dennis Banks (Ojibwe). Arguably, AIM's most famous and publicized protest was the Wounded Knee occupation. During the occupation in 1973, AIM and Oglala Lakota people protested the policies of the Oglala Lakota tribal chairman Dick Wilson and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) by occupying the land where the Wounded Knee Massacre had taken place over eighty years earlier. The situation developed into a tense standoff between the protestors and a combination of FBI agents, military members, and state and BIA police. Shooting eventually broke out between the two groups after 71 days, leaving two Native protestors dead.[33] This protest, among other public demonstrations that AIM helped organize, received a lot of attention from the media and the public. According to Charles Wilkinson, "A Harris poll reported that 93 percent of all Americans had heard of the [Wounded Knee] takeover."[34] This is a concrete example of how the Red Power Movement was able to put Native activism in the public eye in a way that had not been possible before. Even today in the Information Age it is hard to imagine 93% of Americans knowing any one fact. Another excellent example of the publicity that AIM and the Red Power Movement were able to get happened at the 1973 Academy Awards, when Marlon Brando declined to accept the Oscar for Best Actor, instead allowing Native actress Sacheen Littlefeather (Apache) to take the stage and speak about the treatment of Native actors in Hollywood and about Wounded Knee.[35] As Mary Crow Dog phrased it in her memoir, "Some

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[32] Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, 35-36.
[33] Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 144-147.
[34] Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle,* 147.
[35] Tim Molloy, "When Sacheen Littlefeather and Marlon Brando Fought John Wayne for the Soul of the Oscars," *The Wrap*, June 20, 2019, https://www.thewrap.com/sacheen-littlefeather-marlon-brando-oscar-john-wayne/.

people loved AIM, some hated it, but nobody ignored it."[36] They didn't ignore it because they couldn't ignore it.

One organization unable to ignore the influence of AIM was the U.S. federal government. The FBI used a variety of tactics to undermine AIM, including planting at least one undercover informant and conducting mass arrests of AIM members.[37] This resulted in many of AIM's leaders being jailed or tied up in court cases trying to avoid being jailed. One arguably positive effect of this dearth of leadership was that some of the women who were working with AIM, including Phyllis Young and Madonna Thunder Hawk, founded Women of All Red Nations (WARN) in 1974. Previously, Young's main role had been behind the scenes, going over government documents and preparing testimony to be presented in court and the legislature.[38] WARN gave her and other women working in similar roles an opportunity to take a more public role in the Red Power Movement. As Peter Matthiessen puts it in *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, "[WARN] helped to hold AIM projects together in the violent years when the Movement's leaders were dispersed."[39] AIM was a relatively short-lived organization, as by the late-1970s most of the national leadership had disbanded due to a variety of factors, including the FBI interference and disagreements among AIM leaders. While the organization lived on in local chapters, it's time in the spotlight was over.[40] One of the major accomplishments of this era was making Native activism publicly visible in a way that contradicted the narrative that Native people were dying out and part of the past.

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[36] Crow Dog and Erdoes, *Lakota Woman,* 74.
[37] Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, 119-126.
[38] Thunder Hawk and Young, interview.
[39] Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,* 410.
[40] All of the sources I referenced for AIM's decline described the events a little differently, so this brief description is cobbled together from multiple sources. Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*; Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*; Means and Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread.*

Although my paper mostly focuses on the Red Power Movement and contemporary movements, activism was ongoing in the period between these movements. Both the AIM era of activism and the contemporary movements analyzed in this paper are characterized by very visible public protests that drew a lot attention from non-Native people, which makes them easy to find information about and analyze. However, Native activism in the United States did not stop after AIM and suddenly start again with the Keystone Pipeline protests. Activism continued, although much of it was through what Daniel Cobb would call "reformative goals and conventional tactics."[41] For example, a landmark piece of legislation passed in 1990 that supported Native sovereignty was the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This bill allows Native nations to reclaim the bodies of their ancestors from any institution that receives federal funding, such as museums or universities. It also protects burial sites or bodies found on Native or federal land. This bill only become law due to the efforts of Native activists.[42] NAGPRA's major accomplishment was increased recognition that Native people were not disappearing and deserved to have their burial practices and religious practices respected.[43] Though these efforts continued in the tradition of Native activism and achieved tangible results such as NAGPRA, the larger settler colonial apparatus stayed in placed and continued to threaten Native sovereignty and Indigenous people.

Idle No More was founded in Canada in 2012 as a response to these threats to sovereignty. The founders of Idle No More are Jessica Gordon (Cree/Saulteaux Ojibwe), Sylvia McAdam (Cree), Sheela McLean, and Nina Wilson (Lakota/Cree). The movement was created

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[41] Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 2.
[42] James Riding In, "Repatriation: A Pawnee's Perspective," *American Indian Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1996): 241-242, https://doi.org/10.2307/1185703.
[43] Riding In, "Repatriation," 248.

using social media platforms in 2012 in response to a Canada omnibus budget bill, Bill C-45. The bill included provisions that would change the control that Native governments had over environmental regulations. The bill became important to Native activists mostly due to what it signified about the Canadian government's relationship with Native people, rather than its specific contents. It represented a larger issue with the Canadian government not taking First Nations peoples' perspectives into account. What was significant about Bill C-45 was that when these four women were angered by the provisions in the bill and that the government did not consult with Native nations prior to writing it, they decided to do something about their frustration and get other people engaged.[44] The movement was never really about a single issue and continued after the bill was passed. Bill C-45 was simply a catalyst for dissatisfaction and frustration that had been building among Indigenous people. According to McAdam, "It was not intended to dishonor the hard work of phenomenal, passionate, determined activists and lovers of the land. When we said 'Idle No More,' we meant we had been idle, and we didn't want to be anymore."[45] This statement from one of the founders shows that the movement was more about political and civic engagement in general than a specific goal or issue.

Idle No More has been successful as a grassroots movement in getting people, especially Native people, to organize. However, the movement was not successful in getting support from non-Native people in Canada. A poll conducted by Ipsos Reid in January 2013 showed that only 38% of Canadians viewed Idle No More positively.[46] While the goals of the movement were not tied to public approval, this negative view of the movement held by many Canadians certainly

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[44] Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, 2-4.
[45] Sarah Van Gelder, "Why Canada's Indigenous Uprising Is About All of Us," *YES!*, February 8, 2013, https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/issues-how-cooperatives-are-driving-the-new-economy/2013/02/08/why-canada2019s-indigenous-uprising-is-about-all-of-us/.
[46] Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, 107-108.

affected the way it was covered in the media, as Coates documents in his book. Though Idle No More movement started in Canada and has remained a primarily Canadian movement, it also spread to the United States. For example, there is an Idle No More chapter in Hawaii that is part of the movement to protect Mauna Kea from another telescope being built on top of it. This INM chapter has partnered with other Native organizations to disrupt the construction of another telescope, hosting "hundreds of interventions."[47] This example shows that Idle No More is an idea that can be appropriated by other Indigenous people because the frustrations it speaks to are felt by most Indigenous people living in a settler colonial society. Idle No More captured a specific feeling experienced by Indigenous people and was able to inspire Native people across the United States and Canada.

In the United States, Indigenous activism has continued to coalesce around environmental and land-based issues. Pipelines, for instance, have become a flashpoint of Native activism not only because of the threats to land, water, and other resources but also because the United States pushes their construction through Indigenous homelands without Indigenous consent. Native resistance to the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline (KXL) started in early 2014 when Lakota people opened the first Indigenous protest camps against the Pipeline proposed by TC Energy (then known as TransCanada) on the Rosebud Indian Reservation. Opposition against the Pipeline was never exclusively Indigenous, as there were also white land owners who were outraged that the Pipeline was going to be built on their land. However, there are several reasons that Indigenous resistance was distinct from these other protestors, even if they worked alongside each other.[48] Native resistance to extractive industries is inextricably tied to the struggle for land

[47] "INM Hawai'i Protects Mauna Kea," Idle No More*,* accessed January 17, 2021, https://idlenomore.ca/inm-hawaii-protects-mauna-kea/.
[48] Estes, *Our History Is Our Future*, chap. 1.

in the wake of settler colonialism. For Native people, these protests were as much about tribal sovereignty as they are about environmentalism. [49]

The Keystone Pipeline protests were not just about conflict with the federal government, but also within Native communities. For example, the tribal council of Lower Brule had secret meetings with TC Energy about the pipeline. They were accused of violating the Mother Earth Accord that they had signed alongside other Native nations such as Pine Ridge and Standing Rock.[50] Grassroots organizers in the community organized resistance against the local government. One of the most prominent leaders who emerged from the movement was David Archambault, the tribal chairman at the Standing Rock reservation. However, there was never a singular Indigenous leader in the Keystone protest, or even a singular group of leaders. Archambault was simply one of several Indigenous leaders who were influential in the movement. The fight against the Keystone XL Pipeline is still ongoing. The latest news is that President Joe Biden signed an executive order that revokes the permit for the KXL border crossing. However, there are a few ways that TC Energy could appeal this, so the ultimate fate of the Pipeline is still uncertain.[51] Regardless of whether or not the pipelines are eventually built, the protests surrounding them have drawn national attention to the issue of Native sovereignty and inspired Native people across the country to stand up for their land (both federally recognized and traditional) and for their sovereignty.

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[49] Andrew Curley, "Beyond Environmentalism: #NODAPL As Assertion of Tribal Sovereignty," in *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from #NODAPL Movement*, eds. Nick Estes and Jaskiron Dhillon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
[50] Estes, *Our History Is the Future*, chap. 1.
[51] Schiffer Hicks Johnson PLLC, "The Keystone XL Pipeline: What Happens Next?", *JD Supra*, February 3, 2021, https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/the-keystone-xl-pipeline-what-happens-1069399/.

Women in Native Activism

Women have always been an important part of Native history and activism in a way that defies gendered binaries. While from an outsider's perspective it may seem like the Red Power Movement was dominated by male voices, looking at the movement more closely reveals that that is a very shallow interpretation of the way the movement functioned and applies a binary that obfuscates the very important contributions of Native women in 1960s and 1970s activism. Women were integral to the way that AIM functioned, and connecting these movements to Native women's activism today further illuminates the central role of women in Native activism across time. Native women activists have been defying binary categories and working towards creating decolonized futures since the Red Power Movement, and that work continues in contemporary movements.

The highest leadership positions in AIM were held by men who could be dismissive of the contributions of women. In his autobiography *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, Russell Means wrote of the women who worked at AIM, "Their contributions were usually behind the scenes, functioning as an informal network of advisors and keeping everyone informed and motivated." This comment recognizing the contributions of women to the Red Power Movement is fine on its own. The informal network that he describes was just as important to the success of AIM as its formal leadership and is something that Madonna Thunder Hawk and Phyllis Young were a part of and talk about in their interview with the Warrior Women Project.[52] However, within the very same paragraph, Means wrote, "Understanding the female-male balance, they felt no need to be anointed publicly with leadership... They knew a woman's role is *different* than a

[52] Thunder Hawk and Young, interview.

man's - not worse or better – and they didn't try to become something they weren't."[53] It is difficult to interpret this as anything other than dismissive and sexist. The implication is that if these women had tried to take on more public roles they would have been acting like men. Russell Means has created a false binary here, and these women activists would describe their roles very differently.

What Russell Means introduces here is not a binary that existed historically. According to Madonna Thunder Hawk, "Indian women, whether they had an organization and a name or not… women always led the communities. And they still do. Title and position is a new thing. That's the European thing."[54] Thunder Hawk emphasizes that pre-colonization, in many tribes, Native women did not need titles or formal leadership positions to be considered leaders within their own nations. Their opinions were respected due to their importance within communities. For instance, in Lakota communities like Thunder Hawk's, an essential figure from sacred history is White Buffalo Calf Woman, who was said to be responsible for teaching women quillwork and other roles. She also taught the Lakota people their seven second ceremonies, demonstrating that women's gender roles were considered to be as important these rites.[55] This shows that, although White Buffalo Calf Woman was associated with women's work, her broader impact on Lakota society went beyond a strict gendered binary. This important female figure would certainly be considered an example of publically anointed leadership, albeit one that might not come with a formal title. Additionally, within Lakota communities, women's roles were considered

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[53] Means and Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread,* 265.
[54] "Videos," Warrior Women Project, accessed January 5, 2021, https://www.warriorwomen.org/videos.
[55] Christina G. Mello, "Gender and Empowerment: Contemporary Lakota Women of Rosebud," *McNair Scholars Journal* 8, no. 1 (2004): 38, https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1037&context=mcnair.

complementary to men's roles. Both men and women could dissolve a marriage at any time, and women owned everything in the household except a man's hunting tools.[56] This exposes that the gendered binary used by Means and others to describe the work of women activists in the 1960s and 1970s was rooted in settler colonial ideas, rather than Lakota or another Indigenous philosophy.

Native feminist scholars deconstruct the colonial gender binary that dominates popular discussions of Native activism, sometimes unintentionally perpetuated by male activists caught up in the patriarchal systems of settler colonialism. One way that settler colonialism can manifest is in attempts to assimilate the Native population into the dominate culture. The United States and Canada both have a long history of this, and some American and Canadian policies reinforced a gender binary in Native communities that is distinctly Anglo-European. Some of these policies include the boarding schools for Native children that become common in both countries and the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) in the United States.[57] Part of decolonization in some Native nations has been reassessing the role of women before the arrival of Europeans and the institution of these policies. Examples of these efforts include reinterpreting the story of White Buffalo Calf Woman in an Indigenous context,[58] as described earlier, and restoring the Flower Dance in the Hoopa Valley Tribe.[59] These efforts are important, as I explained in my definition of Native activism. However, referring to Cutcha Risling Baldy's decolonizing praxis, decolonizing should not be so focused on the past that people lose sight of the future. [60] While

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[56] Mello, "Gender and Empowerment," 36.
[57] Renya Ramirez, "Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: A Native Feminist Approach to Belonging," *Meridians* 7, no. 2 (2007): 28-29, https://doi.org/10.2979/MER.2007.7.2.22.
[58] Mello, "Gender and Empowerment," 38.
[59] Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*.
[60] Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing for You*, 7-8.

past Indigenous conceptions of gender and gender roles can inform modern conceptions and assist in dispelling the settler colonist perspective (as I did in the paragraph above by incorporating the story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman), Native people should also not feel obligated to follow them to the letter. The ultimate goal of most Native activism is, after all, to produce a better present and, therefore, a better future. Breaking down these gendered binaries imposed by settler colonialism can help Native people work towards a future that is better for all Indigenous people and where Indigenous women and their accomplishments are valued rather than brushed aside or dismissed.

Returning to the gender binary in the Red Power Movement that Means describes, it was not a good description of the actions of Native women even during the time that Means was working at AIM. Women did take on more public-facing leadership positions as part of Women of All Red Nations (WARN). WARN was founded by a number of woman activists who had previously worked at AIM, including Phyllis Young and Madonna Thunder Hawk. WARN's activism primarily focused on issues that were specifically impacting Native women. Perhaps most significantly, they drew public attention to the Indian Health Service's forced sterilization program against Native women.[61] This activism was important because it brought to light an issue that had previous gone unrecognized by non-Native people and that AIM had not chosen to highlight, as AIM focused more on the big picture, drawing attention to tribal and land sovereignty. Forced sterilization represented a subtler way that settler colonialism was undermining Native nations. Due to the way WARN intersected with AIM, the activism of these women cannot be categorized into a strict gender binary.

[61] Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, 422.

Overall, women were important to the day-to-day functioning of AIM, even when they were not taking on public leadership roles. There also were women taking on public leadership roles during the Red Power Movement, as shown in the work done by Phyllis Young, Madonna Thunder Hawk, and others as part of WARN. Imposing strict binaries on the role of women in Native activism is an example of the patriarchal nature of settler colonialism and is at odds with the way that women were traditionally perceived in Indigenous nations such as the Lakota. In a broader sense, these strict binaries also interfere with the ability of Native women to create Indigenous futures that meet their needs.

The modern lens of intersectionality also reveals some of the ways that the activism of Native women defies boundaries. The essential idea behind intersectionality is that people who are marginalized in two or more ways face problems that are unique to any of those groups. This academic concept has become more widely known and accepted over the past few decades since it was first named in 1989.[62] Intersectionality is very relevant to binaries as it is an idea that inherently defies them. The fundamental idea behind intersectionality is that not all people who share an identity can be grouped together. Since people have intersecting identities, they will have needs that differ from the group. In the context of Native women's activism, this means that movements that focus on Native people and movements that focus on women will not necessarily be able to meet the needs of Native women. Intersectionality shows the necessity of activism specifically about and by Native women.

[62] The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her essay about the oppression of Black women in the United States; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

Although intersectionality is a relatively recent term that has only entered popular consciousness in the past decade or so, it is a concept that women of color have understood for much longer. In an interview with The Warrior Women Project, Madonna Thunder Hawk told a story about a time when she felt alienated from American feminism. Thunder Hawk was invited to speak at an east coast college about her activism. The keynote speaker for the event was feminist Bella Abzug, who Thunder Hawk describes as one of her heroes. Abzug was explaining how women were just as integral to building America as men when she said, "We [women] fought on every frontier of this country – the trek west." Thunder Hawk thought, "Fought who?" and realized how invisible Indigenous people, and specifically Indigenous women, still were, even to other activists.[63] Even though Thunder Hawk admired white feminists and was inspired by them, in that moment she felt alienated from the movement. She knew that she and other Native women had experiences and problems that feminists like Abzug would never understand. Thunder Hawk did not need the word intersectionality to describe that feeling or the necessity for Native women to have their own movements.

Intersectionality can also help contextualize the contemporary activism of Native women. For example, the activism surrounding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), which intersects with both Keystone and INM, demonstrates the necessity of having movements specifically for Native women. Native women, especially those that live on reservations, are more vulnerable to domestic violence and sexual assault for reasons that come from being both Native and women. While all types of women are vulnerable to assault and domestic violence, there are problems specific to Native women that mean they need their own

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[63] Madonna Thunder Hawk, "Madonna Thunder Hawk 1998," interview by Elizabeth A. Castle, The Warrior Women Project, October 29, 1998, video, 3:49, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vI-8fgoJTKM.

movements. It can also be more difficult for a Native woman to pursue criminal charges against her attacker because U.S. attorneys often decline to prosecute criminal cases that occurred on Native land, especially sexual assault and domestic violence cases.[64] Because criminal cases for violent crimes that occur on reservations are so complicated, Native activists must push for legislation to address these gaps in the justice system. The strategies of activists vary widely, with some activists working with the system to get legislation such as Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act signed into law,[65] and others like the Red Dress Campaign working to raise awareness of the issue through art.[66] However, they are all working toward the same goal: to create better futures for Indigenous communities, including women.

Additionally, movements that are not necessarily centered around Native women will intersect with the problems facing Native women. This is because many of the problems that Native people face are systemic. The problems pervade the entire system so it is difficult to identify where one problem ends and another begins. For example, as mentioned earlier, conversations about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) inevitably lead to discussions about the issues of jurisdiction on reservation land and the complicated nature of tribal court systems. Similarly, MMIWG intersects with other movements, including the Keystone Pipeline protests. Extractive industries often lead to the formation of "man camps," as these workplaces tend to be dominated by men. When extractive industries are set up near

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[64] Mary Hudetz, "Despite Past Reforms, Native Women Face High Rates of Crime," *The Associated Press,* September 5, 2018, https://apnews.com/article/316529000f3c44988969ab22acfb34d7.
[65] Acee Agoyo, "'A Historic Day': #MMIW Legislation Finally Signed into Law," *Indianz.Com*, October 12, 2020, https://www.indianz.com/News/2020/10/12/a-historic-day-mmiw-legislation-finally-signed-into-law/.
[66] "Red Dress Campaign," Kumugwe Cultural Society, accessed March 1, 2021, https://kumugwe.ca/red-dress-awareness-campaign/.

Indigenous land, these man camps lead to an increase in violence against Native women and girls. The Sovereign Bodies Institute explains that the oil boom in the Bakken region in North Dakota has led to increased sex-trafficking of Native women.[67] In the Bakken, the exploitation of land was linked to the exploitation of Native women in a very direct way. Building the Keystone XL Pipeline will lead to an increase in the number of man camps near Indigenous land, which would likely lead to same increase in violence against Native women seen in North Dakota.[68] Some women, including the original members of WARN,[69] have protested the pipeline for this very reason. Because of how interconnected these issues are, it can be difficult to form a movement around a single problem. Many modern Native movements and protests are interconnected in a way that can be confusing to people who have not faced systemic injustice. A protest might be call unfocused or confused when it is simply trying to address several interconnected problems. A movement that is not explicitly about Native women's issues may still be addressing a problem Native women face in an indirect way.

Additionally, there are women-led Native movements that are not necessarily centered on Native women's issues. Idle No More was founded by four women, but it is not about women's issues in the way that MMIWG is explicitly about violence against Native women. When asked to describe the future goals of Idle No More in 2013, Sylvia McAdam stated that she believed "indigenous self-determination, sovereignty, protection of land and water" were the issues

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[67] Sovereign Bodies Institute and Brave Heart Society, *Zuya Winyan Wicayu'onihan: Honoring Warrior Women* (Santa Rosa: Sovereign Bodies Institute, 2019), 13-14, accessed February 27, 2021, https://2a840442-f49a-45b0-b1a1-7531a7cd3d30.filesusr.com/ugd/6b33f7_27835308ecc84e5aae8ffbdb7f20403c.pdf.
[68] Sovereign Bodies Institute and Brave Heart Society, *Zuya Winyan Wicayu'onihan*, 20-21.
[69] "Video: W.A.R.N. Ride," Warrior Women Project, accessed March 1, 2021, https://www.warriorwomen.org/blog/2020/1/9/video-warn-ride.

"critical at this point."[70] These issues affect Native women, but they are not centered around Native women. All of these intersections show that it is impossible to categorize Native women's activism into strict binaries.

In conclusion, the participation of Native women in Native activism has always defied settler-imposed binaries. Native women have been defying gendered binaries and creating their own futures since the Red Power Movement in the 1960s and 1970s and continue to do so in contemporary activism. Additionally, applying the lens of intersectionality shows that activism can't really be divided into categories like "Native movements" and "feminist movements" or "Native movements" and "Native women's movements." Native women have movements and organizations of their own, including WARN beginning in the 1970s and the contemporary movement to stop violence against Native women. Movements that are not explicitly about Native women often intersect with the problems facing them, as seen with the man camps common in extractive industries, and women have become important leaders in movements that are not centered on women, such as Idle No More. Dismissing their roles in national activist organizations or confining them to "women's" issues distorts and limits our understanding of Native activism. Instead, viewing Native women's activism beyond the binary reveals the ways in which Native women have been working towards Indigenous futures over the past sixty years of activism.

Intergenerational vs Immediate Change

In a presentation he gave about global warming, activist Oren Lyons (Haudenosaunee) recounted the oral history of the Peacemaker who united the five warring nations that would become the Haudenosaunee. According to Lyons, the Peacemaker said, quote, "When you

[70] Van Gelder, "Why Canada's Indigenous Uprising Is About All of Us."

council for the welfare of the people, think not of yourself nor of your family, nor even your generation. Make your decisions on behalf of the Seventh Generation coming."[71] The term seventh generation has since become commonplace in Native activism. It is not typically used to literally indicate the Seventh Generation, but rather to encourage Native activists and the people they are trying to reach to think of future generations in everything they do and every decision they make. Lyons goes on to say, "Seven generations ago someone was looking out for me or else I wouldn't be here. So, each one of us are any Seventh Generation and ahead of us are our responsibilities."[72] Here, Lyons is emphasizing the Haudenosaunee idea that every generation has a responsibility to the future. I saw this Indigenous idea referenced often throughout my research, and, while it is certainly not an idea unique to Native activism, it is something that is emphasized in Native activism much more often than in other movements. Examining this idea further will reveal how Native activism defies being categorized into the binaries "short-term vs long-term" and "success vs failure." The Seventh Generation and intergenerational change also directly ties into how Native activism works to create decolonized Indigenous futures.

The prevalence of the term "Seventh Generation" points to how many Native activists focus on the idea of intergenerational change. When activist movements like AIM, the Keystone Pipeline protests, and Idle No More are discussed, there is an impulse to focus solely on the protestors' immediate concerns.[73] An inevitable question is, "What are they asking for?"

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[71] Oren Lyons, "Looking Toward the Seventh Generation," American Indian Studies Program, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, April 17, 2008, Presentation.
[72] Lyons, "Looking Toward the Seventh Generation."
[73] Ben Makuch, "What Exactly Is Idle No More?", *VICE,* January 10, 2013, https://www.vice.com/en/article/xd43yd/what-exactly-is-idle-no-more; Sam Levin, "Dakota Access Pipeline: The Who, What and Why of the Standing Rock Protests," *The Guardian*, November 3, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer.

According to Ken Coates, this became a problem for Idle No More. He writes, "While non-Aboriginal observers focused on the direct political consequences of Idle No More, the movement itself sought long-term change."[74] It is important for protestors to have specific goals and talking points so that they can communicate a message. However, analyzing Native activism shows that long-term concerns can be just as important as these specific goals. Both types of change are important. Activism that focuses on short-term goals can improve people's lives in a very direct way. However, looking at the history of Native activism shows just how important an understanding of long-term change can be.

The idea of intergenerational change was an important part of the Red Power Movement. In an interview for the Warrior Women Project, Choach Means and Madonna Thunder Hawk describe how they knew about the historical oppression of Native people from their families and oral histories, even though it was not something taught in school.[75] Their relatives helped foster Native activism in future Lakota generations, which paid off when Means, Thunder Hawk, and other Lakota people of their generation joined AIM and the Red Power Movement. Because the idea of activism had been passed down to the younger generation, when the mid-twentieth century proved to be a time of change with the success of the Black Civil Rights Movement, Native people were able to take advantage of this opportunity to create new organizations and movements that fit the time.

These activists also kept intergenerational change in mind while they were part of AIM. In another interview with the Warrior Women Project, Phyllis Young said, "We [women] fought

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[74] Ken Coates. *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of Canada* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 129.
[75] Choach Means and Madonna Thunder Hawk, "MTH Choach Means 2 16 05," interview by Elizabeth A. Castle, The Warrior Women Project, February 16, 2005, video, 1:48:36, https://youtu.be/t-2Rmjdmg2Q.

so we could have choice. We didn't have those choices. You know the choices for the women before us was to marry a white man. That was your out, that was your survival." Young says that Native women before her generation made choices for their survival and the survival of their children. This allowed Young and her generation to focus on breaking down institutional barriers that prevented Native people from fighting for the rights from within the system.[76] Here, Young is describing how intergenerational change happened within her own community. Previous generations fought for her, and so she fought for future generations. She also fought for future generations to have alternative ways to enact change. According to Daniel Cobb, "Historians have only begun to appreciate the activism of persons who carried their causes into the 1970s, worked within the liberal establishment rather than taking to the streets, and contributed to the renaissance of a potent, political, cultural, and economic conservatism."[77] This quote helps illustrate Young's point that her generation's activism helped pave the way for Native people to work within the system to enact change. For example, U.S. Representative Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) was one of the first two Native women elected to serve in the United States Congress. Once she was elected, she helped to pass two bills that would help address the MMIWG crisis.[78] It took both lobbying from activists outside Congress and work from supporters within Congress to pass these bills, and the Red Power Movement and other Native activists helped create more opportunities for Haaland and other Native people to get into positions in the federal government. This shows that by making intergenerational change a priority, Native activists were able to develop new strategies for short-term change.

The issue of intergenerational change also raises an issue with another binary that is often

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[76] Thunder Hawk and Young, interview.
[77] Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 5.
[78] Agoyo, "'A Historic Day.'"

imposed on activist movements: Was the movement a success or failure? The balance between intergenerational and immediate change in Native activism reveals the flaws with this question. A failure in the short-term may not be a failure fifty years from now. Phyllis Young states that her legacy should be based on the lives of her children. She does not measure her success in terms of the specific goals that she achieved in her lifetime, but rather by how the choices she made affected her children. [79] This way of evaluating the success of a movement is just as valid as looking at the immediate changes brought about by the movement, especially when taking into account the story of the Seventh Generation, and how that has impacted the way Native activists approach their goals. Both intergenerational change and immediate change should be considered when evaluating the effects and activist movement has had.

Idle No More is probably the best example of a Native movement that was portrayed by the news media as a failure, even though it actually accomplished quite a lot by empowering Native people. The Canadian budget bill (Bill C-45) that Idle No More originally coalesced around was passed. However, as I explained in my historical overview, the movement was never really about just the one omnibus budget bill. According to Ken Coates, the "lasting impact" of the movement "started by changing the perspectives of Aboriginal people and challenging them, individually and collectively, to take greater responsibility for their future and their relationships with non-Aboriginal people."[80] This quote directly ties the impact of Idle No More to intergenerational change and creating Indigenous futures. Additionally, one of the founders of INM, Sylvia McAdam, said of herself and the other founders, "One of our strongest motivations is our children. We want them to witness that we weren't silent about Bill C-45, and we want

[79] Thunder Hawk and Young, interview.
[80] Coates, *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of Canada*, 127.

them to be able to be a part of our resistance."[81] These quotes echo what Phyllis Young, Choach Means, and Madonna Thunder Hawk said in their interviews, which demonstrates how this idea of intergenerational change is common to both of the eras of activism I studied and is important to activists from various Native nations in both the United States and Canada. Furthermore, the way that these quotes tie intergenerational change specifically to children and future activists shows that one goal of some Native activists is to foster changes in how Native people engage with politics and activism. This is a type of intergenerational change that is less about specific achievements in improving Native sovereignty and is more about decolonization. This achievement of Idle No More is only revealed when looking at the movement with intergenerational change in mind.

To expand on this, when looking through the lens of long-term or intergenerational change, there is no such thing as a "failed" movement. For example, the Keystone Pipeline protests were about a specific problem with a specific solution. Activists did not want the Keystone Pipeline to be built under Native land and near the Ogallala Aquifer. As I explained in my historical overview, there was a lot more going on, but, for the most part, this movement centered around a specific, current issue. However, its leaders still emphasized the importance of focusing on long-term goals. In August 2017, David Archambault said to a crowd, "Men have come up to me, young men who said they were ready to lay down their lives. But I told them, no! We do not want that! We want you to live and prosper and be good fathers and grandfathers." [82] This statement shows that even within a movement as specific as the Keystone protests there was still an emphasis on future generations. In Archambault's mind, the need to stop the Keystone

[81] Van Gelder, "Why Canada's Indigenous Uprising Is About All of Us."
[82] Estes, *Our History Is the Future*, chap. 1.

pipeline from being built did not supersede the importance of looking ahead to future generations. Even if the Keystone XL pipeline is (eventually) built, the movement will not have been a failure since its leaders had intergenerational change in mind. The people who were a part of the movement will be able to inspire and mentor future generations of potential activists.

While the idea of the Seventh Generation is tribally specific, this focus on intergenerational change permeates many different Native movements led by activists from various nations.[83] Native activists have been able to balance their short-term goals with long-term goals that lead to intergenerational change. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, we can see the effects of this focus on intergenerational change, such as Representative Deb Haaland being elected to Congress and being able to advocate for Native women's rights in the House of Representatives. Also, looking at the effects of these movements with intergenerational change in mind reveals that it is difficult for a movement founded on this principle to ever entirely fail. Many Native activists focus on creating new opportunities for future generations or simply making sure that those generations will have mentors to educate and inspire them about Native activism. In this way, the focus on intergenerational change in Native activism directly leads to the creation of decolonized Indigenous futures by expanding the strategies available to Native people and ensuring that future generations of Native people understand the importance of decolonizing activism.

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[83] Lyons, "Looking Toward the Seventh Generation"; Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Bernie Hunhoff, "Black Elk Was Right," *South Dakota Magazine*, March 23, 2012, https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/seventh-generation.

Conclusion

Native activists in the Red Power Movement and in more recent movements such as Keystone and Idle No More have used a variety of strategies to create decolonized Indigenous futures. These strategies defy categorization into the strict binaries that are often applied to activist movements. Looking past these binaries by examining the role of women in Native activism and how Native movements balance short-term goals and strategies with an overall focus on intergenerational change reveals activism that defies categorization into gender binaries and cannot be categorized as strictly successful or unsuccessful.

Examining these flawed binaries helps us better contextualize the Red Power Movement, the Keystone protests, and Idle No More within a long and continuous history of Native resistance to settler colonialism and threats to sovereignty. This is important to understanding the goals and strategies of contemporary Native movements, and new Native movements that will arise in the future. Additionally, studying how these artificially imposed binaries distort other contemporary activist movements, such as Black Lives Matter, could lead to insights about their strategies, philosophies, and context within a long period of resistance as well. Improving our understanding of contemporary activism will allow us to engage with these movements in a way that is respectful of their context within history and their goals for the future.

Native people in the United States and Canada continue to face threats to their sovereignty, land, and culture and experience the effects of centuries of settler colonialism. Throughout this paper, I have shown that approaching Native activism with settler-imposed binaries limits our understanding of Native resistance to these problems and can lead to misunderstandings about the strategies and long-term goals of Native activists. As the founder of the Warrior Women Project Elizabeth Castle said about threats to sovereignty, “We talk about

these things as if they happened in a specific historical moment in the past and it's now over—but that's not how history works, it is absolutely intergenerational."[84] Pushing past binaries allows us to understand that intergenerational struggle and see the connections between modern day activism and past Indigenous resistance. My analysis has shown that Native activism should be approached with a better understanding of the myriad roles that women, historically and today, have held in Native activist movements and an open mind about what successful activism can look like. As activist Madonna Thunder Hawk reminds us, "When you're struggling to maintain what you have, it's important that each generation knows what the last generation did and learn from that. So when it's their turn, they can stand strong. They'll know what happened in the past through our own eyes, our own writing, our own telling."[85] I can only re-tell the stories of Thunder Hawk and her fellow activists, but my hope is that this paper helps to keep the narrative of this activism alive and centered on the inspiring men and women who have never stopped working to build a future for their people.

[84] Elizabeth A. Castle, "Mother's Day," The Warrior Women Project, May 13, 2020, https://www.warriorwomen.org/blog/2020/5/11/mothers-day-warrior-women-style.
[85] "Extended Interviews," William Kunstler, POV, accessed March 5, 2021, http://archive.pov.org/disturbingtheuniverse/extended-interviews/9/.

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